

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for a mailing machine to provide evidence of postage for mail pieces comprising:

setting a postage value;

generating indicium data for a first indicium based on the postage value, the indicium data being generated without accounting for the indicium data in the mailing machine;

storing the indicium data in a buffer;

continuously generating additional indicium data for a plurality of subsequent indicia in immediate succession without accounting for the indicium data for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the mailing machine and storing the indicium data for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the buffer until the buffer is full or a new postage value is set;

determining if a mail piece is present in the mailing machine;

if a mail piece is present, retrieving one of the indicium data from the buffer;

accounting for the indiciu ~~data~~ postage value retrieved from the buffer in from at least one register in the mailing machine ~~for the indicium data retrieved from the buffer;~~
and

using the indicium data to provide evidence of postage for the mail piece.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the indicium data includes a digital signature.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the indicium data ~~is further based~~ includes a value from the at least one register.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the at least one register includes an ascending register and a descending register.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the at least one register further includes a piece count register.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4, wherein generating additional indicium data further comprises:

generating additional indicium data based on what values of the ascending and descending registers would be ~~if from a previous indicium data had been accounted for.~~

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein if a new postage value is set, the method further comprises:

erasing all indicium data stored in the buffer.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the buffer is a first-in, first-out buffer.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein setting a postage value further comprises:

receiving the postage value from an operator.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein setting a postage value further comprises:

setting the postage value based on a weight of the mail piece.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the indicium data includes an image of an indicium, and using the indicium data to evidence postage further comprises:

printing the image of the indicium on the mail piece.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein using the indicium data to evidence postage further comprises:

generating an image of an indicium based on the indicium data; and

printing the image of the indicium on the mail piece.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein generating an image of an indicium further comprises:

combining the indicium data with other information to generate the image of the indicium.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for a mailing machine to provide evidence of postage for mail pieces comprising:

generating indicium data including a partial computation of a digital signature required to create an indicium that provides evidence of postage, the indicium data being generated without accounting for the indicium data in the mailing machine;

storing the indicium data in a buffer;

generating additional indicium data for a plurality of subsequent indicia in immediate succession without accounting for the indicium data for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the mailing machine and storing the indicium data for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the buffer;

determining if a mail piece is present in the mailing machine;

if a mail piece is present, retrieving one of the indicium data from the buffer;

setting a postage value for the mail piece;

accounting for the postage value from at least one register in the mailing machine for the indicium data retrieved from the buffer;

computing the digital signature using the indicium data and the postage value;

and

providing the digital signature as part of an indicium that provides evidence of postage for the mail piece.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein generating an indicium data further comprises:

generating an indicium data before processing of the mail pieces begins.

16. (Currently Amended) A security device for providing indicium data for use in evidencing postage, the security device comprising:

at least one register;

a buffer; and

a processor to generate the indicia coupled to the buffer and the at least one register, the processor generating indicium data for a first indicium based on a postage value, the indicium data being generated without accounting for the indicium data in the security device, and storing the indicium data in the buffer, the processor continuously generating in immediate succession additional indicium data for a plurality of subsequent indicia without accounting for the indicium data for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the security device, until the buffer is full or a new postage value is set, the processor, upon request to provide one of the indicium data, retrieving one of the indicium data previously stored in the buffer for use in evidencing postage on a mail piece and accounting for the postage value from the at least one register for the indicium data retrieved from the buffer.

17. (Original) The security device of claim 16, wherein the indicium data includes a digital signature.

18. (Currently Amended) The security device of claim 16, wherein the indicium data is ~~further based on~~ includes a value from the at least one register.

19. (Original) The security device of claim 18, wherein the at least one register includes an ascending register and a descending register.

20. (Original) The security device of claim 19, wherein the at least one register further includes a piece count register.

21. (Currently Amended) The security device of claim 19, wherein the processor generates the additional indicium data based on what values of the ascending and descending registers would be ~~if from~~ a previous indicium data had been accounted for.

22. (Original) The security device of claim 16, wherein if a new postage value is set, the processor erases all indicium data stored in the buffer.

23. (Original) The security device of claim 16, wherein the buffer is a first-in, first-out buffer.

24. (Currently Amended) A mailing machine comprising:

a printer for printing an indicium on a mail piece;

a controller coupled to the printer;

a buffer; and

a security device coupled to the controller, the security device including at least one register and a processor coupled to the at least one register, the processor generating indicium data for a first indicium based on a postage value without accounting for the indicium data in the mailing machine and storing the indicium data in the buffer, the processor continuously generating in immediate succession additional indicium data for a plurality of subsequent indicia without accounting for the indicium data for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the mailing machine until the buffer is full or a new postage value is set, the processor, upon request to provide one of the indicium data, retrieving one of the indicium data previously stored in from the buffer and accounting for the postage value from the at least one register for the indicium data retrieved from the buffer,

wherein the indicium data is used to form the indicium for printing on the mail piece by the printer.

25. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 24, wherein the indicium data includes a digital signature.

26. (Currently Amended) The mailing machine of claim 24, wherein the indicium data ~~is further based on~~ includes a value from the at least one register.

27. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 26, wherein the at least one register includes an ascending register and a descending register.

28. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 27, wherein the at least one register further includes a piece count register.

29. (Currently Amended) The mailing machine of claim 27, wherein the processor generates the additional indicium data based on what values of the ascending and descending registers would be ~~if from a previous indicium data had been accounted for.~~

30. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 24, wherein if a new postage value is set, the processor erases all indicium data stored in the buffer.

31. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 24, wherein the buffer is a first-in, first-out buffer.

32. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 24, wherein the buffer is integral with the security device.

33. (Currently Amended) A mailing machine comprising:

a printer for printing an indicium on a mail piece;

a controller coupled to the printer;

a buffer; and

a security device coupled to the controller, the security device including a processor, the processor generating indicium data without accounting for the indicium data in the mailing machine and storing the indicium data in the buffer, the indicium data

including a partial computation of a digital signature required to create an indicium, the processor generating in immediate succession additional indicium data for a plurality of subsequent indicia without accounting for the indicium data for the plurality of subsequent indicia and storing the additional indicium data in the buffer until the buffer is full, the processor, upon request to provide one of the indicium data, retrieving one of the indicium data previously stored in~~from~~ the buffer and computing a full digital signature using the indicium data,

wherein the full digital signature is used as part of the indicium for printing on a mail piece by the printer.

34. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 33, wherein the processor generates indicium data before processing of the mail pieces begins.